

BASIC POSITIONS OF SLOVAK GOVERNMENT'S ROMA COMMUNITIES INTEGRATION POLICY

Developing national or ethnic identity and its protection are a natural right of minorities. Tendencies to maintain or revive historic regional or ethnic communities became stronger in European countries in the last decade. The interests of the communities and their need of having own tradition, language, culture, as well as the efforts of the majority communities and national governments to create a counterweight to the increasingly stronger European integration by supporting minorities and regional communities are the reasons behind it. The care for existing minorities is in a way an indication of the future of whole nations. The current European Union (EU) reform includes a strong supporting and protecting dimension with respect to minorities. This fact is important also with respect to their participation and influence in the EU bodies and institutions.

The degree of minorities integration and their coexistence with the majority society are the condition for a successful functioning of Slovakia in the EU. Countries going through the integration process that failed to resolve the situation of their minorities will have only limited chances to succeed in the community of European countries. Productive integration through political participation, education and employment is the premise for a conflict free coexistence. The price to be paid for postponed solutions would be too high.

The search for a model of coexistence of a part of the Roma minority with the majority as well as the choice of integration procedures and steps are a difficult multifaceted problem the solution of which is a subject of ongoing discussions also in other European countries. In a uniting Europe the Roma face similar challenges as other ethnic groups. They are, however, considered an all-European specific non-territorial minority. Its specific nature is the reflection of a different history, extermination practices in the WWII, assimilation programmes of the communist era as well as a residue of a non-systemic and superficial approach in the post-communist period. Poverty, dependence on the social system together with the historic legacy of the past have resulted into the current social exclusion with elements of discrimination. While the essence of the Roma issue is of a socio-economic nature and it is linked with poverty the approach to the potential of their human and economic development assumes a full enjoyment of human rights.

Experience shows that strong assimilation pressures neglecting specific features, regardless of how well meant, fail to produce the desired results. A real integration and inclusion of the Roma ethnic group, and thus also an improvement of their standard of living, can be achieved, on the one hand, on the basis of the broadest possible consensus and a political will, on the other hand. Successive, properly timed and comprehensive approaches that will offset unequal opportunities and that put into effect equality of opportunities are the starting points for long lasting all-society solution.

It is clear that the existence of a political vision of the final situation enjoying the acceptance of the whole society and being the product of an agreement reached between the minority and the majority is the premise of a successful integration. The proposed solutions must be reached by a political consensus and must not become a means of political struggle. For the process of shaping solutions to be successful it has to be open to a public and expert discussion.

Therefore the specification of Basic Positions of Slovak Government's Roma Communities Integration Policy reflecting not only the specific aspects and conditions of Roma communities in Slovakia but

also the international political context seems to be the first and fundamental task in the search for positive and mutually acceptable solutions of the current situation of the Slovak Roma.

1. The approach to tackling the Roma issues after the 2002 elections

After the September 2002 parliamentary elections the Government declared in its Memorandum: "The Government considers tackling the Roma issues its priority and it shall continue to support concrete development programmes for ensuring the improvement of the situation and integration of the Roma in the society including its adequate financial coverage. The Government shall prepare the continuation of the strategy for tackling the situation of the Roma community and in order to strengthen the implementation effectiveness and efficiency of individual plans it shall complete the development of technical and specific capacities directly in the regions where larger numbers of citizens belonging to the Roma minority live. The Government shall continue implementing the current useful projects in the area of education, housing, infrastructure and social sector while taking into account the aspects of a harmonious coexistence of Roma and non-Roma citizens."

This material is a set of solutions and concrete steps translating the declared political will of the Government into real life. It needs to be supported with financial, institutional and human capacities. A state authority having the adequate scope of competences and sufficient administrative capacities ensuring its capability to administer and implement the policy at a regional level shall be responsible for the solution of the issue.

2. The objectives of the integration policy

Integration is a balanced stable possibility of an ethnic group to participate in the social and economic life of a country on the basis of equal opportunities without jeopardising its identity (linguistic, cultural) that enriches the cultural wealth of the society with its specific features.

In our situation the social exclusion of a part of the Roma population means a general disadvantaged status mainly in the field of education, employment, housing, health and social care and access to services. The strategic goal in addressing the issue of poverty and social exclusion is the support to the process of social inclusion through policies focused on achieving equal opportunities in the social field, employment, health care, housing and education. Social inclusion can be supported by guaranteeing adequate conditions and resources for a life in dignity, equal access to quality services (legal protection, education, health care, social care, culture, etc.), employment as a right and equal opportunities for all, tackling disadvantaged situations in education, and ensuring adequate housing for all.

The Government of the Slovak Republic considers integration of the Roma, as an emancipated national minority, with the Slovak society an important task in the public policy domain. Creating conditions for integration is not a special service for the Roma it is mainly a contribution to the society as a whole. In the process of integration the minority must receive a permanent support from the state. It is a task the minority cannot manage alone. The state must create affirmative action for disadvantaged groups and, thus, support acquiring of education, skills and employment. The public opinion around the Roma is based on the understanding that

an active and targeted support for the Roma minority to give them equal opportunities is a kind of an "original sin" committed on the democratic principle of the equality of citizens.

Integration based policy means to make the best of the results achieved in the governmental policies applied, to define and intensify programmes aiming at ensuring real equal opportunities for the persons belonging to the Roma minority. Achieving integration requires continuing the creation of real opportunities for equal participation in the political, social and economic life of the society. The Romany culture is a part of the common cultural wealth of the Slovak Republic.

The ways in which the policy goals are being achieved are based on the human rights principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and international human rights conventions signed and ratified by the Slovak Republic. These rights guarantee the Roma minority, inter alia, the right to participate in addressing the matters concerning the national minority and to freely decide on one's own national origin.

The policy is based on the belief that the key components of the problems persons belonging to the Roma minority face are perpetuating negative stereotypes, insufficient unbiased information on this national minority, prejudice and the resulting intolerance on the side of the majority population. Therefore the effort to change the attitude of the majority to the Roma minority is the long-term objective of the activities under this policy.

A legal framework for the protection of minority rights is necessary but not sufficient for a stable integration. A broader context of development means possibilities, choice, participation and responsibility.

The policy is based on partnership with the NGOs the activities of which are a significant and irreplaceable contribution to the solutions of the Roma community situation in the Slovak Republic.

However, integration is a two-way street. It requires changes on both sides - both from the majority and also from minority groups. Co-operation must be based on the understanding that integration is in the interest of both. Moreover, a successful integration is possible only when the international communities will share the responsibility with national governments, civic society and private sector in finding solutions for such an endangered group as the Roma.

3. Affirmative action - achieving equal opportunities

Adopting temporary affirmative action is a vehicle for achieving equality and a life in dignity as proved by the practice spread in many developed democratic countries. In international law that is an important source of anti-discrimination legislation affirmative action is considered legitimate measure aiming at achieving de facto equality for disadvantaged groups. The UN Human Rights Committee holds that "the principle of equality sometimes requires States Parties to take affirmative action in order to diminish or eliminate conditions which cause or help to perpetuate discrimination prohibited by the Covenant (on Civil and Political Rights)." Similarly, Article 2 paragraph 2 of the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination encourages the State Parties to take special measures for the purpose of guaranteeing full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Under Article 4 paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities the parties

undertake "to adopt, where necessary, adequate measures in order to promote, in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, full and effective equality between persons belonging to a national minority and those belonging to the majority." and further that "In this respect, they shall take due account of the specific conditions of the persons belonging to national minorities." EU Council Directive No. 43/2000 of 29 June 2000 laying down the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin requires positive actions by states in order to ensure "full equality in practice" in a similar spirit. This may include adopting or maintaining "specific measures to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked with racial or ethnic origin". In its latest Recommendation No. 7 on combating racism and racial discrimination adopted on 17 December 2002 the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance recommends adopting of temporary special measures designed to prevent or compensate for or to facilitate their full participation in all fields of life for groups suffering from discrimination on grounds of their ethnic or racial origin. These measures should not be continued once the intended objectives have been achieved.

Under the principles enshrined in international law these affirmative actions are in compliance with the principle of equality and the right to non-discrimination if these special measures are adopted :

- a. with the approval of the persons belonging to the groups they concern,
- b. on the basis of a sole objective, which is achieving equality,
- c. on a temporary basis,
- d. suspended when the proclaimed goal has been achieved,
- e. not a consequence of maintaining unequal or different standards.

If the adopted measures focusing on equal opportunities satisfy these requirements they do not constitute discrimination against the rest of the population. The implementation of temporary affirmative action does not constitute the improvement of the situation of one group of persons but it concerns facilitating equal opportunities with the objective to achieve de facto equality, which is the fundamental requirement for the enjoyment of other human rights and freedoms. In case of affirmative action focusing on the Roma the measures are of temporary nature and they do not impose quotas of permanent character. Therefore it is not possible to conclude that they would contradict Article 12 paragraph 2 or the provisions of Article 34 paragraph 3 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. Discriminatory differentiation is a measure that has no objective or rational justification or that supports an illegitimate goal or that violates the principle of proportionality between the goal and the means employed to achieve it.

The Government realizes that a substantial percentage of persons belonging to the Roma minority currently fails to enjoy the same starting position as the majority population in Slovakia for various historic and other reasons. Their opportunity to be included and to participate in the life of the country is not equal. The principle of equal opportunities is the crucial prerequisite for the exercise of all fundamental human rights and freedoms. The experience gained from the implementation of previous strategies has proved that it is necessary to adopt measures for achieving equal opportunities in the whole ambit of public administration.

Political will, highly professional co-ordination of adopted measures with a strong emphasis on regionalisation and direct participation by the Roma is an important dimension in adopting affirmative actions. Adopting affirmative actions must be accompanied with majority population awareness-raising aiming at convincing them of the need and contribution of such measures for the whole society and of the reasons for their implementation.

¹General Comments , 18 UN Human Rights Committee.(Non-Discrimination: 10/11/89, ICCPR General Comment 18, paragraph 10) Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities published by Notification of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the SR No. 160/1998. The date of effect for the Slovak Republic is 1 February 1998 and the date of validity 4 June 1998.

A. Education

Education seems to be the priority key to solving various problems linked with the situation of the Roma population. At the same time it is obvious that the education is only the necessary condition and in order to achieve a de facto materialisation of it all the actors directly or indirectly concerned with the issue must become one concert.

Based on the experience gained from the implementation of various steps in the area of education in 1998-2002 the issues of equal opportunities and access to education seem to be very important. The creation of integrated education guarantees equality of the participation in creating common values of the society. The school is for the Roma children from segregated settlements a complex, unknown and formalised environment difficult to get incorporated into. The difficulties in the education are mainly caused by the fact that the "present school" fails reflect the multicultural composition of the Slovak society.

1. The educational structure of the Roma population

The level of education and the educational structure of the population are the reflection and also the result of concrete steps implemented in the educational system. In the 1991 census 76.68 % of the Roma had basic education as the highest level of completed education. 8.07 % identified vocational school without a school leaving examination. Only 0.60 % of the Roma had secondary technical education. Only 0.84 % of the Roma had full secondary education as the highest level of education completed. Out of all the ethnic groups living in Slovakia the Roma had the lowest percentage of university students.

2. Unequal opportunities of Roma children in access to education

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic guarantees everyone the right to education (Article 42). Everyone has the right to education regardless of sex, race, colour, language, belief and religion, political affiliation or other conviction, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic origin, property, descent or any other status. (Article 12, paragraph 2 of the Constitution).

Surveys as well as experience gained in the 1998 - 2002 period show that inequality of Roma children opportunities is caused mainly by:

- curricula and teaching methods mainly reflect the values and expectations of the majority population thus failing to provide sufficient room for the development of the talents and capabilities of the Roma children,

- the teachers are not sufficiently prepared to cope with teaching in a multicultural class
- children are not sufficiently prepared to understand the teaching instructions given by the teacher in the official language, they have poor motivation, they lack positive models oriented on education
- the distance of the schools from municipalities is several kilometres and taking into account the low social and economic status of the families it represents a substantial barrier and often also the reason for putting the children to special schools which are closer to their residence,

The disproportionally high representation of Roma children in special schools is a separate problem requiring immediate action. It is necessary to adopt effective measures in the field of school readiness testing, pre-school education, preparatory grades and the content of education in the sector of the Ministry of Education.

The objective of this material is to propose concrete measures to ensure equal opportunities to Roma children through many temporary measures in the area of school legislation and also to create institutionally and financially room for educating the Roma children in their mother tongue.

2.1 Educating in the language of national minorities

Article 34 paragraph 2 of the Constitution guarantees the citizens belonging to national minorities their right to education in their language. The Slovak Constitution and the obligations the Slovak Republic acceded to in the framework of the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages guarantee the persons belonging to national minorities the right to be educated in their mother tongue. The Slovak Republic has, inter alia, undertaken to,

- a. ensure that the teaching of the relevant regional or minority languages becomes an integral part of the curricula at the primary school level; This commitment was adopted for the Bulgarian, Czech, Croatian, German, Polish and the Romany.
- b. ensure that teaching of the Romany language becomes an integral part of the curricula at secondary school and secondary technical schools.

The Ministry of Education as the competent body of state administration has the responsibility to create room for Roma children in case of their interest to be educated also in the Romany language in long-term, i.e. the period 2004-2010. Materialising this responsibility requires in addition to a reliable survey of needs in this area also amending Section 3 paragraph 1 of Act No. 29/1984 Coll. on the system of primary and secondary schools (the School Act) as amended or adopting of a new law. According to the Programme Memorandum of the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Plan of Main Tasks of the Ministry of Education drafting of the legislative concept of a new education law is under preparation with the deadline of 30 September 2003.

It is not possible to ensure the exercise of this right in the short term also because of lack of qualified teachers capable of teaching in the Romany language. Therefore it is necessary to devise temporary measures with the objective to train sufficient number of teachers teaching in the Romany language in the period 2004 - 2010.

3. Education as a mean to preventing and coping with negative attitudes and prejudice on the side of the majority

Negative attitudes of a part of the majority to the Roma minority play an important role in the current unsatisfactory situation of the Roma minority. The content and methods of child education from early age on are one of the most effective means to achieve the identified integrating goal. Two significant components should be present in the content and method of education: education to human rights and education taking into account the principles of multiculturalism.

3.1 Education to human rights

In December 1994 the UN General Assembly announced the Decade for Human Rights Education from 1 January 1995 to 31 December 2004 in its Resolution 1994/184 on the basis of Paragraph 33 of the Vienna Declaration and the Action Plan adopted by the UN General Assembly at the 1993 Human Rights World Conference. National governments are playing an active role in the effective implementation and strengthening of human rights education at all levels of education. Active cooperation with national human rights institutions and NGOs is indispensable for the achievement of this task.

Education to tolerance, mutual respect and understand in the framework of the 2000 - 2001 Action Plan for the Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance and also the education in the framework of the 2002-2003 Action Plan are the first steps to materialising the goals of the UN Decade.

The level of human rights education at all levels of education cannot be considered satisfactory as confirmed by evaluation reports made by international human rights organisations. It is necessary that the Ministry of Education as the sectoral state administration body drafts and financially covers the National Education Plan in the Area of Human Rights as a systemic measure to eliminate the existing shortcomings in the 2004-2006 period.

3.2 Multicultural education

The prerequisite for creating room for the integration of minorities, in particular the Roma into the society is the change of negative attitudes in a part of the majority population. It can be achieved through a systemic change in the content of education. On one level it concerns a consistent education to human rights and tolerance. At the lower level understanding must be achieved that the minority Romany culture is a part of the common culture of the society. This objective can be achieved through systemic multicultural education.

Though several projects have been carried out in this area no sufficient systemic conditions for implementing multicultural education covering the whole country have been created so far in Slovakia.

Middle-term (2003-2006) and long-term (to 2010) measures that have to be adopted in the sector of the Ministry of Education:

1. to elaborate a policy of Romany children and youth integrated education with the objective to facilitate equal opportunities of Romany children in access to education,
2. to adopt temporary affirmative action tackling segregation and also real accessibility of education for Roma children in the context of decentralisation in the school system,
3. to cover the teacher's assistants activities financially at all those kindergartens and primary schools that are attended by a high percentage of Roma children. Teacher's assistants are a means of giving Roma children equal opportunity to make it in a broader context of the society,
4. to create conditions for further education of teachers and teacher's assistants from schools with high concentration of the Roma with a special emphasis on the co-operation between the teacher and the assistant,
5. to draft a development policy for the Roma youth having secondary and university level of education,
6. to adopt temporary affirmative action in the field of enrolment of Roma pupils and students to secondary schools and secondary vocational schools,
7. to establish a scholarship fund for secondary school and university Roma students,
8. to draft a report on the conditions of education and training of Roma children from segregated Roma settlements,
9. to regularly monitor the successfulness and school attendance of Roma children in the school system,
10. to ensure the implementation of alternative forms of pre-school education of children.
11. to draft a new act on education and training that will also include the implementation of commitments in the area of education resulting from the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages,
12. to devise temporary affirmative actions with the objective to train sufficient number of teachers teaching in the Romany language,
13. to draft a National Human Rights Education Plan for all levels of education in the meaning of paragraph 11 of the 1995-2004 UN Action Plan for the Decade for Human Rights Education. The National Plan should be the starting line for a sustainable human rights education also for the period after the lapse of the decade in 2004,
14. to guarantee the principles of multicultural education in a systemic way,
15. to motivate the pupils attending the final grades of primary schools to continue their studies at secondary schools and secondary vocational schools and to ensure their systemic training for the enrolment interview at secondary schools and secondary vocational schools, and to ensure the training of primary school teachers and teacher's assistants in this context,
16. to create conditions for distance or evening studies with the objective to complete the study and to pass the school-leaving examination,
17. to influence the regular school attendance with financial tools,
18. to create the possibility for granting a school aids or boarding financial support to children from poor families,
19. to determine the condition of school buildings, in particular of kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools, in order to ensure funds for their reconstruction,
20. to build and reconstruct kindergartens and primary schools in localities with higher population growth.

The 2003 priorities:

- to draft and adopt a policy of Romany children and youth integrated education including a proposal of temporary affirmative action,
- to cover the teacher's assistants activities financially and capacity-wise at all those kindergartens and primary schools that are attended by a high percentage of Romany children,
- to support the drafting of a set of tests taking into account cultural differences and to gradually re-integrate Roma children from special schools,
- to draft a development policy for Roma youth having secondary and university education,
- to establish a scholarship fund for the support of studying Roma children,
- to draft a report on the education and training of Roma children from segregated Roma settlements.

B. Employment and the social sector

1. Employment

The employability rate of citizens is one of the fundamental premises for social and labour integration. Traditional skills of the Roma do not offer a potential solution for their unemployment - they are only of marginal interest for the labour market. Though some data indicate discrimination against the Roma in the labour market it is not the only reason for their problems in job-seeking. Low level of education and skills is their major weakness in the skills competition in the labour market. In addition, employers' attitudes to employing persons belonging to this ethnic group have a negative and undesirable effect on the employment rate of this minority.

1. 1. Discrimination against the Roma in the labour market

Article 35 of the Constitution guarantees everyone the right to work. Everyone has the right to work regardless of sex, race, colour, language, belief and religion, political affiliation or other conviction, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic origin, property, descent or any other status. (Article 12, paragraph 2 of the Constitution) The persons belonging to the Roma minority are de facto discriminated against in the access to employment as stated in evaluation reports made by international human rights organisations.

This disadvantaged position has different causes, e.g. the employers refuse to employ the Roma on grounds of their ethnic origin or the employers refuse to employ the Roma because they lack the necessary qualification. These facts should be seen in a broader context. The past assimilation practices combined with insufficient level of access to education have significantly diminished the chances of the Roma to establish their economic and political presence in the transition period.

The situation of Roma women requires special attention as their position in the labour market is made more difficult by their discrimination firstly on grounds of ethnic origin, and secondly on grounds of gender.

The objective pursued by the temporary affirmative actions taken by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family should be creating equality of opportunities in the labour market for the Roma while special attention should be paid to the situation of women.

Priorities in achieving an improvement of the Roma population situation in the labour market:

1. increasing the employability of registered unemployed including the Roma, in particular the long-term unemployed ones, through development of programmes facilitating acquiring and maintaining of skills and of reskilling programmes,
2. integration of persons facing social exclusion including the persons belonging to the Roma ethnic minority in the labour market by creating rules regulating the concurrence of income from employment and income from public resources,
3. to support job creation for risk groups, including the Roma, in the labour market,
4. to involve mainly young people, including the young Roma, in social and voluntary activities,
5. to support alternative employment services and social integration of groups of citizens who require more care in the labour market, including the Roma.

2. The social sector

In addition to a high unemployment rate the social situation of the Roma in Slovakia is also determined by the low level of education and housing Act No. 195/1998 Coll. on social assistance that distinguishes material need caused by subjective and objective reasons had a very negative effect mainly in the Roma settlement communities. In the first half of 2002 the number of recipients of social assistance benefits increased by 2,928 compared with the first half of 2001, i.e. 642,069 persons which is 11.9 % of the population at an unemployment rate of some 20 %.

From 1 January 2003 amended act on social assistance limiting the income of families in material need on objective grounds to SKK 2,900 compared with SKK 3,490, and to SKK 1,450 from SKK 1,745 on subjective grounds is being applied. Children are always classified on objective grounds, in case of independent minor up to SKK 1,000 and in case of dependent child up to SKK 1,600. The social assistance benefit must not exceed a total of SKK 10,500. It is a fixed amount independent from the number of the members of the family. On the one hand this step has increased the difference between the amount of a social assistance benefit and the minimum wage which is set at a level of SKK 5,570 , and thus strengthened the motivation to get employed, on the other hand, the possibility to find a job remained unrealistic in regions where the general level of unemployment is around 25 - 30 per cent.

The amendment of the social assistance act in effect from 1 January 2003 links receiving of social assistance benefits with smaller public services performed for the municipality and its locality. On the one hand, the measure helps to acquire work habits, on the other hand it does not resolve the problem in municipalities with larger Roma communities because the number of available jobs is too low to satisfy all citizens. The amendment of the social assistance act

linking payment of child benefits with regular school attendance had a positive effect on reducing absenteeism in school age children. Ensuring regular school attendance (when the school is in another distant municipality) is often beyond the financial possibilities of some Roma families because of the material need in which they live. The experience gained in 2000-2001 has confirmed the urgent need of social work in field.

The temporary affirmative actions of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs should, in the short-term and medium term (2003 - 2006), focus on:

1. creating legislative conditions for social work in field at the level of local state administration and self-governments, incorporating social work in field in the catalogue of works for public service,
2. adopting measures for improving the efficiency of the institute of special recipient,
3. decentralised granting of social assistance and, thus, allowing the individual regions to adjust the programmes of social assistance to local and regional conditions,
4. creating legislative conditions for social work at the level of NGOs and other non-profit institutions and for supporting social counselling agencies,
5. creating a network of mainly Roma advisors for addressing the problems of the Roma community at regional and local self-government levels taking into account the planned closure of district authorities,
6. drafting a study on the impact and effect of the social system reform on the Roma community and a study mapping the Roma family at the Research Institute of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in 2003-2006 and to allocate sufficient funds for this purpose.

The 2003 priorities:

- to draft a temporary affirmative action programme aiming at ensuring equal opportunities for the persons belonging to the Roma minority in the social sector,
- to cover the implementation of the Social Field Workers Programme in terms of legislation and funds,
- to create a consultant network at the level of higher territorial units,
- to draft a report on the impact and effect of social system changes on the Roma community in selected Roma settlements in which the Social Field Workers Programme and the Comprehensive Development Programme are being implemented.

C. Housing

The housing conditions of the Roma living in integrated and segregated areas differ significantly. 620 Roma settlements of an urban and also rural type with a total number of inhabitants of 139,560 making 24,342 families living in 15,016 dwellings were registered in Slovakia at the end of 2001. Out of the total of 620 Roma settlements 154 are located outside towns and villages

and 466 settlements are located at the periphery or very close to towns or villages. The number of shacks is 4,511 (the 2001 Annual Report on Housing Agglomerations at a Low Socio-Cultural Level - (Roma settlements)).

The Slovak Republic is bound by the obligation resulting from the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, namely, to ensure everyone an adequate standard of living (Article 11 paragraph 1 of the Covenant). The exercise of this right shall take into account legal certainty of housing, ensuring access to services and infrastructure, price affordability of housing, habitability, accessibility, appropriate location of housing allowing access to employment, health services, schools, kindergartens and other social facilities. One of the supporting programmes ensuring the enjoyment of the right to adequate standard of housing is the Ministry for Construction and Regional Development SR subprogramme of social acquisition of rental flats. The programme is being implemented on the basis of Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 335/2001 to the Proposal of Support for the Construction of Communal Rental Flats of Different Standard designed to House Citizens in Material Need and also the Technical Infrastructure in Roma Settlements. The rules for the construction of communal rental flats of different standard and also the technical infrastructure in Roma settlements lay down that a municipality will get a state subsidy up to 80 % of purchase costs and 20 % are usually represented by the work of future users contributed to their construction. Currently the Ministry for Construction and Regional Development SR does not have sufficient funds allocated for constructing new buildings under the housing development programmes in 2003 and this results in the slowing down of the implementation of projects prepared.

The implementation of the programme proves that in the sector of the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development and the Ministry for the Environment there is a need to adopt temporary affirmative actions and projects focusing on :

1. continuing the "Support Programme for the Construction of Communal Rental Flats of Different Standard designed to House Citizens in Material Need and also the Technical Infrastructure in Roma Settlements" including its funding from the state budget to ensure its permanent implementation,
2. making the granting of state subsidies for building of flats to municipalities conditional upon drafting comprehensive development programmes linked with the National Development Plan of the Slovak Republic and the De Minimis Assistance Programme for the development of districts with high unemployment rate,
3. linking together the Comprehensive Roma Settlement Development Programme, Support Programme for the Construction of Communal Rental Flats of Different Standard linked with the National Development Plan of the Slovak Republic and the De Minimis Assistance Programme for the development of districts with high unemployment rate.

The 2003 priorities:

- to continue in the building of social flats in Roma settlements,
- on the basis of the National Development Plan to elaborate the principles of regional policy taking into account marginalized groups of the Roma population,
- to ensure potable water source in Roma settlements

D. Health

The most sensitive indicator of population health is the so called life expectancy calculated from the current mortality population ratios. According to demographic estimates the life expectancy in the Roma is significantly shorter than in the other population. If the calculated life expectancy for men in Slovakia is 66.5 years than for the Roma men this value is estimated by 12 years less (54.5). A significant difference is also estimated in life expectancy of women with an average for women in Slovakia being 76.5 while in Roma women this indicator is by 10 years less (68.5). Child mortality compared with the mortality of all children up to five years of age in Slovakia is also significantly higher.

The life in Roma settlements - rural settlements with overcrowded dwellings, absent innocuous potable water, sewage system or cesspits for waste water, accumulating solid quickly decaying communal waste and no adequate access road - is high risk.

The main factors determining the lower quality of Roma population health are today:

- lower level of education which may be the source of insufficient level of health and social awareness,
- low personal hygiene standard,
- low communal hygiene standard,
- the already mentioned low housing standard and hazardous environment linked with polluted and devastated environment,
- unhealthy eating habits, unsuitable nutrition,
- increasing rate of alcohol and tobacco products consumption also during pregnancy,
- growing drug addiction and thus higher risk of HIV and hepatitis B and C infection.

1. Unequal approach in health care

Article 40 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic ensures everyone the right to protection of his or her health and the right to free health care and medical equipment for disabilities under the terms to be laid down by a law. Everyone has the access to the right to the protection of health and health care regardless of sex, race, colour, belief and religion, political affiliation or other conviction, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic origin, property, descent or any other status (Article 12, paragraph 2 of the Constitution). Under Article 1 paragraph 1 of the Charter of Patient's Rights adopted by Resolution of the Government No. 326/2001 of 11 April 2001 everyone has the right to respect of his or her fundamental rights and freedoms while being given health care. Paragraph 2 of the same Article lays down the right to access to health care without any discrimination and Article 2 paragraph 4 the right to equal access to health care.

However, the Roma citizens have been disadvantaged in the provision of health care e.g. with segregating measures in hospitals when the Roma patients are placed separately from the non-Roma patients or when they are given special consulting hours. The approach of some health

care workers violates the rights of the Roma to human dignity on the grounds of their ethnic origin.

The equal access to health care is enshrined in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. In Article 12. Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is a part of the legal order of the Slovak Republic, lays down the obligation of State Parties to recognise the right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The basic obligations of states in the recognition of this right that must be unconditionally ensured by the state regardless of its economic situation include the obligation to ensure access to health facilities, goods and services without any discrimination: (de iure and also de facto), in particular for the most endangered and marginalized groups of population. In addition the state has the obligation to ensure that no third persons may violate the right to health within the jurisdiction of that state.

2. Financially and practically accessible provision of health care

In its Section 2, Act No. 272/1994 Coll. on the protection of human health defines health as a condition of full physical, mental and social comfort and not only an absence of a disease; it is the result of relations between the human organism and the socio-economic, physical, chemical and biological factors of the environment, work environment and way of living (paragraph 1). Under this provision the protection of health is a set of measures composed of the prevention of the emergence and propagation of diseases and the limitation of occurrence and of health disorders, improvement of health through care for sound living conditions and a healthy way of living and the performance of state health supervision (paragraph 2). Under Section 10 of this act state administration authorities and municipalities have the obligation to create prerequisites for sound living conditions, working conditions and a sound way of living, to carry out disease prevention measures imposed by bodies of health protection and to co-operate with them in the implementation of their tasks.

Section 3 of Act No. 277/1994 Coll. on health care as amended stipulates the obligations of the state in the provision of health care that should be at a professional level, continuous, systematic and accessible. The recognition of the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health requires health care provision accessible in a safe physical distance for all population segments, in particular the most endangered and marginalized groups like ethnic minorities, indigenous people, women, children, adolescents, older persons, persons with disability and HIV/AIDS infected people.

Most Roma settlements are located several kilometres from health care facilities. This fact together with the low social and economic status and other reasons affects the unequal access of the Roma to health care. Identical treatment is, however, not sufficient to achieve real de facto equality. In order to make health care really accessible to the Roma the sector under the Ministry of Health should adopt temporary affirmative actions covering primary health care including preventive care, and thus influence the existing unequal status of the Roma.

3. The protection of reproduction health

The rights linked with reproduction health are an important component of human rights in the field of health. A systemic approach to the protection of the reproduction health is missing in the Slovak Republic. Considering the social and economic exclusion of a significant number of persons belonging to the Roma minority this shortcoming in the public policy has an even more significant impact on this minority. Especially education in the field of family planning is insufficient. The fact that sexual education is a part of the education at higher grades of primary schools, which a significant percentage of Roma pupils fail to achieve, is also a problem. Provision of information concerning the reproductive rights of women, in particular to Roma women in an easy to understand and acceptable form is insufficient.

3.1 Provision of information concerning family planning

All information on family planning methods or sexually transmitted diseases must be available in an acceptable form. Article 34 paragraph 7 of the Constitution of the SR guarantees the right of persons belonging to a national minority to receive information in their other tongue. This right is regulated only in Act No. 270/1995 Coll. on the state language of the Slovak Republic in its Section 8 paragraph 4 under which "Communication of medical staff with the patients is usually conducted in the state language; if the person concerned is a citizen or alien not in command of the state language it is also conducted in a language in which it is possible to communicate with the patient". The 1994 Cairo UN International Conference on Population and Development Action Plan also formulates these requirements on states. (Chapter 7, provision 7.5).

To achieve de facto access to health care and health of the Roma it is necessary to adopt temporary medium-term (2003 - 2006) and long-term (till 2010) affirmative actions falling under the competence of the Ministry of Health:

1. to incorporate the system of temporary affirmative actions focusing on the sufficient motivation of doctors, in particular doctors of the first contact, who provide health care including the reproduction health education to the Roma in the framework of the amendment process of Act No. 98/1995 Coll. on the Rules of Medical Treatment as amended,
2. to carry out a health survey among the inhabitants of Roma settlements, The survey should be carried out in co-operation with local doctors and inhabitants of the communities who enjoy the trust of their fellow-citizens. A pilot project in 5 areas should be carried out with the objective to gain the trust of the people prior to the survey,
3. to improve the co-ordination of programmes in the field of health and health care of the Roma by allocating a person or institution that would be responsible for all the projects concerning the health of the Roma,
4. to include the funding of the Programme for Upgrading the Environment, Hygiene Standard and Infectious Disease Prevention among the Inhabitants of the Roma Settlements approved by Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 550 of 17 May 2002 in the state budget in 2004. The percentage of vaccinated inhabitants of the Roma settlements shall be increased from 70 to 95 % in the coming five years,
5. to draft a programme for improving the work of field workers of state health care institutions including also expanded health assistance network of Roma settlements,
6. to support and enlarge the network of health assistants who would provide health care in particular to children and mothers also as field work in the Roma settlements,

7. to expand the programmes focused on the prevention of all forms of discrimination, racism and intolerance in health care,
8. to elaborate a Comprehensive Systemic Human Rights Education Programme for health care workers and students of such vocations,
9. to adopt a comprehensive national reproductive health programme while special attention should be paid to women from marginalized groups,
10. to draft a model of mobile health units operating in remote localities responsible also for the education, vaccination and counselling in addition to the responsibility for acute cases in compliance with the decentralisation process in the health care sector.
- 11.

The 2003 priorities:

- to draft a health care accessibility system together with financial coverage for marginalized Roma communities
- to elaborate a Health Condition Report of the population living in the Roma settlements

E. Human rights

1. Discrimination against the persons belonging to the Roma minority

Article 12, paragraph 1 of the Constitution enshrines the freedom and equality of people in dignity and in rights while under paragraph 2 "fundamental rights shall be guaranteed in the Slovak Republic to everyone regardless of sex, race, colour, language, belief and religion, political affiliation or other conviction, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic origin, property, descent or any other status." Persons belonging to the Roma minority are in an unequal position with respect to the majority mainly in the field of education, housing, employment and health care as observed in evaluation reports drafted by international intergovernmental and non-governmental human rights organisations and important EU progress reports . Measures aiming at gradual elimination of inequality should take two lines - prevention and sanctioning of these negative phenomena.

1.1 Prevention of discrimination

The focus on the prevention of this negative phenomenon mainly through systemic education of professional groups and influencing the majority population opinion in a positive way is an important condition for successfully coping with this negative phenomenon. The 2000-2001 Action Plan for the Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance adopted by the Government with its Resolution No. 382/2000 on 3 May, is a tool of the Government for achieving this goal. The 2002 - 2003 Action Plan for the Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and

Other Forms of Intolerance adopted by the Government with its Resolution No. 207/2002 on 6 March 2002 (hereinafter the "2002-2003 Action Plan") is its current continuation.

The 2002 - 2003 Action Plan activities are translated into concrete steps in several areas: the prevention of all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism in various areas of life, education, cultural activities aiming at bolstering up Roma communities and combating extremism and similar manifestations of intolerance. The Action Plan implementation progress is evaluated every six months. Systemic education of persons belonging to professional groups who have influence on the prevention of all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other manifestations of intolerance while performing their occupation in an important tool of the 2002-2003 Action Plan. (Training of Police Force officers, judges, candidate judges and officers of the Corps of Prison and Court Guard, prosecutors and prosecutor candidates, Armed Forces officers, educational workers and future educational workers, social services staff and staff of the social affairs departments at district or regional authorities.)

The first 2002-2003 Action Plan Progress Report adopted with Resolution of the Government No. 136 of 26 February stated that the state administration bodies concerned provided education and training in their sectors mainly in the form of seminars and discussions. Only a relatively small number of persons belonging to professional groups takes part in these activities because of financial restrictions and other reasons. Therefore it is necessary to redesign them into a sustainable and systemic project with the objective to educate the highest possible percentage of, if not all, employees in the given sectors. When planning training activities it is necessary to monitor the percentage of "trained" staff out of the total number of employees in the sector taking into account the regional representation. The "Liaison Project" carried out under the auspices of the Ministry of Education is a good example of systemic training. The subject of the project is education of selected secondary school teachers of history and other subjects, which include instructions on the Holocaust. After this training the teachers act as multipliers who train other teachers with a similar focus in their region, this, the percentage of final project recipient is significantly increased.

1.2 Sanctioning of discrimination

The existence of a comprehensive and effective anti-discrimination legislation is the fundamental condition for eliminating and preventing all forms of discrimination. The first draft act on the application of the equal treatment principle (the so called Anti-Discrimination Act) was approved by the Slovak Government with its resolution No. 557 on 29 May 2002. In the 1998-2002 term the National Council did not debate the draft law. In November 2002 the Human Rights and Minorities Section of the Office of the Government prepared an amended draft law on the application of the equal treatment principle, which is in the inter-ministerial commenting procedure and shall be prepared for the session of the Government beginning of April 2003.

The reason for the submission of the draft law on the application of the equal treatment principle is the absence of a compact legislation that would cover discrimination in a comprehensive way. The relevant provisions have a purely declarative nature, they lack uniformity, they are scattered in the whole legal order and they fail to provide for a uniform level of protection. Discrimination as such is not a crime. Under the currently valid legislation the victims of discrimination have no effective legal remedy available even if they could prove that they were discriminated against

while exercising one of the fundamental rights or a right guaranteed by law. Therefore the draft of the anti-discrimination act introduces such legal remedies. The draft law grants the victims of discrimination the right to sue the discriminator and to request refraining from such conduct and, if possible, reinstating. The draft law also provides for the possibility to claim appropriate satisfaction and compensation for other than proprietary harm in cash, the amount of which shall be determined by the court taking into account the seriousness of the harm suffered and the circumstances under which discrimination occurred. The draft law also introduces a new legal institute in the legal order, namely the transfer of the burden of proof on the respondent. This institute means that it shall be for the respondent to prove that there has been no discrimination; it is not sufficient to present only a declaration as to this fact. This shall apply to cases when the person who claims to be discriminated against establish before a court facts from which it may be presumed that there has been discrimination.

The proposed anti-discrimination law is based EU Council Directive No. 43/2000 of 29 June 2000 laying down the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and EU Council Directive No. 78/2000 of 27 November 2000 that lays a general framework for equal treatment in employment and gainful activity. The proposed legislation regulates the area of discrimination in a consistent way, thus making access to legal remedies possible for the victims. There is reason to believe that the special legislation will have also a preventive effect.

The draft anti-discrimination act includes also an amendment of Act No. 308/1993 Coll. as amended on the establishment of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights would support practical implementation of the anti-discrimination law mainly by:

1. continually monitoring and evaluating the observance of the equal treatment principle,
2. participating in dispute resolution, providing legal assistance to victims of discrimination,
3. issuing expert opinions in cases of equal treatment upon request by natural persons or legal entities or out of own initiative, developing a national information network on racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism with a link to the European Information Network ,
4. carrying out surveys and research for the provision of data in the field of human rights, collecting and disseminating information in this area,
5. preparing educational activities, participating in information campaigns, providing library and other services.
6. The prepared draft anti-discrimination law takes into account the material need of having a complex piece of legislation and also recommendations to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation as stated in the Regular Report on Slovakia's Progress towards Accession of 9 October 2002, p. 24.

1.2.1 Legal assistance to victims of discrimination in the application of legal remedies

The persons belonging to the Roma minority are the socially weakest strata of the Slovak population. Because of the low economic and social status their capacity to defend themselves against discrimination and to use legal remedies for protection is substantially limited. The programme of free legal assistance for socially weaker citizens which already exists in the area

of civil law, family law and labour relations under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice is a suitable complement to the prevention and effective protection laid down in the law. Free legal advice is only provided in some larger cities during a few days in a week at given hours. (Free legal consultancy is also the activity of some NGOs.) Considering the regional distribution of existing legal advisory centres there is reason to believe that the socially weaker citizens living in remote settlements have significantly more difficult access to them.

2. The Roma and racially motivated violence

The reports by domestic and international human rights intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations point out the phenomenon of racially motivated violence against the Roma. The government is aware of this problem and this is reflected in the commitments resulting from the 2002-2003 Action Plan. Concrete measures and solutions take this into account. The Commission for Addressing Racially Motivated Violence established with Order of the Minister for the Interior of the SR No. 61/2002 is responsible for the exchange of information on and knowledge of racially motivated crime occurrence with an emphasis on all forms of violence and co-ordination of a joint procedure in eliminating all forms and manifestations of racial discrimination on a state wide level. Representatives of NGOs are also members of the commission. In order to improve the effectiveness of activities it is necessary to establish commissions also at the level of regional and possibly also district Police Force headquarters (in districts with more frequent occurrence of racially motivated crime).

In addition to preventing racially motivated crime, active confidence building between the Roma communities and the police should be the objective of the long-term strategy. Creating of the function of a police expert for the work with Roma communities is also one of the conditions necessary for achieving the defined goal. Such an expert would not only pass the obligatory police officer training but also attend specialised training focusing on the acquisition of knowledge on the Romany culture, tradition and language. This expert would serve in the public order service and he/she would operate in districts with a higher concentration of the persons belonging to the Roma minority. While performing his/her duty they would focus on solving problems linked with attacks on Roma communities, conflicts between the majority and minority and criminality inside the community. He/she would develop activities aimed at crime prevention be it crime committed on the Roma, among the Roma or by the Roma. In his/her job they would actively co-operate with the police officer tasked with extremism cases at the district and/or regional level. The police expert competence would also include activities focusing on the prevention and assistance in detecting the crime of usury occurring in Roma communities. Resolving the wide-spread problem of usury would, however, also require a long term approach and active co-operation of the victims with the prosecution and judiciary.

Raising public awareness of the risk and unacceptability of such conduct is also a way of preventing racially motivated violence. Informing the public, and thus also the potential perpetrators, on a regular basis and media presentation of cleared racially motivated violence cases by the relevant sectors, Ministry for the Interior and the Police Force of the SR are an effective preventive measure.

3. Strengthening of trust in penal justice among the persons belonging to the Roma minority

As a standard, the relations between the persons belonging to the Roma minority and criminal justice staff are not positive. Mediation and probation service represents an alternative way of tackling crime the objective of which is to contribute to the strengthening of trust in penal justice. The institute of mediation and probation service strives to achieve the correction of criminal offenders, attempts to motivate them to take responsibility for their actions and to participate in designing the proposals for handling the damage caused. It takes into account the interest of the victims of crime and offers them a possibility of getting involved in the design of the manner in which damage caused by the crime is handled. In mediation a civil servant trained for this purpose facilitates the search for alternative resolution of the dispute while duly taking into account the interests and needs of the perpetrator, the victim and the society. In this way he/she creates conditions for effective and fair decisions on alternative sentence. The agreement by all parties to the dispute is a necessary condition for mediation. The purpose of the probation service is to create conditions for the application of alternative sentences. During a sentence combined with probation, the probation service officer shall encourage the offender to lead a life that is in compliance with the laws in addition to executing supervision over the offender. He/she also co-operates with the family and social environment in which the offender lives and/or works. The probation and mediation service pays special attention to the care for juvenile accused and the accused of an age close to juvenile. Amendment to the Criminal Procedure Code with Act No. 422/2002 Coll. established a legal framework for mediation by introducing the institute of dispute settlement and conciliation under conditions laid down by the law.

The current pilot probation and mediation service project of the criminal Law Section at the Ministry of Justice in co-operation NGO representatives takes these facts into account. The pilot probation and mediation service project is based on the plan of the Government to newly codify the Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code with the aim to change the philosophy followed in imposing criminal sanctions. In the new philosophy emphasis should be put on the individual approach in criminal matters using the possibility of alternative sentences. A task force at the Ministry of Justice works with the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Roma Communities together on the pilot project because one of the pilot projects is implemented in a district with a numerous Roma community - Spišská Nová Ves. The task force has prepared a Draft Probation and Mediation Service Act that should come into effect on 1 January 2004 and which should create the institutional background for mediation and conciliation in criminal matters. Probation and mediation service has the potential to significantly strengthen the trust in penal justice among the persons belonging to the Roma minority. Persons belonging to the Roma minority trained and later represented among the probation and mediation service officers would help to achieve the goals of the probation and mediation services in combination with addressing the Roma challenge.

Measures in the sectors of state administration:

1. In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of discrimination prevention each relevant sector should draft a sustainable plan for a systemic education of selected professional groups focusing on the prevention of all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other manifestations of intolerance from 2004 and prospects to 2010 and cover it financially in the 2004 budget.

2. Improving the effectiveness of discrimination behaviour sanctioning requires, on the one hand, adopting the draft anti-discrimination legislation, and, on the other hand, it is necessary to link the existing initiative of the Ministry of Justice and the NGOs in the framework of the Comprehensive Roma Settlement Development Programme and to create and financially cover free legal consultancy for socially weaker citizens in co-operation with the Slovak National Human Rights Centre, law schools, universities, Police Force Academy.

In order to improve preventing and sanctioning racially motivated crime it is necessary to adopt and financially cover concrete medium-term (2003 - 2006) and long-term (till 2010) actions falling under the competence of the Ministry for the Interior and the Ministry of Justice:

1. to create a commission for racially motivated crime of the Police force also at a regional level,
2. to elaborate an analytical material concerning the function of a police specialist for the work with Roma communities,
3. to increase the risk linked with racially motivated crime through its higher media coverage,
4. to ensure the functioning of the Probation and Mediation Service in terms of legislation, institutions and funds with the objective to strengthen the trust of the Roma in penal justice in the 2004-2006 period,
5. to draft and financially cover in the 2004 budget a sustainable plan for a systemic education of selected professional groups focusing on the prevention of all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other manifestations of intolerance from 2004 and prospects to 2010 .

The 2003 priorities:

- to assess the implemented educational projects in the area of the prevention of all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other manifestations of intolerance with respect to the percentage of relevant professional groups trained,
- to draft a policy for an expanded system of free legal consultancy for socially weaker citizens taking into account regions with a higher concentration of the Roma minority,
- to elaborate an analytical material concerning the function of a police specialist for the work with Roma communities,

F. The development of the Romany culture

The right to the development of own culture is necessary for national and ethnic minorities to have a full and free life in the countries where they live. The reason for this important status, which this right enjoys in international human rights agreements, is also laid down in Article 34 paragraph 1 of the Constitution. The Slovak Republic has many obligations in financing minority cultures resulting from the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages the Slovak Republic has undertaken. The Minority Culture Financing Act currently being prepared at the Ministry of Culture is a systemic step in this field. Its drafting is based on the Plan of Legislative Work of the Government adopted with Resolution No. 1358 of 11 December 2002. This act

should also implement the commitments resulting from the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, which include for instance:

- Article 11 paragraph 1, subparagraph ei) to support and/or facilitate founding and/or maintaining at least one daily in regional or minority languages,
- subparagraph eii) to apply the existing measures on the financial support also to the production of audio-visual products in regional or minority languages,
- Article 12 paragraph 1 to support cultural activities and facilities, in particular libraries, videotheques, cultural centres, archives, academies, theatres, etc.

The approach of the media to the Roma co-shapes the attitude of the society to the Roma. This attitude of the majority community is also reflected in the way how information is presented and also in the content of information presented. The legal provisions on the access of minorities to public means are also insufficient. According to the 2001 Plan of Legislative Tasks of the Government of the SR, Act No. 254/1991 Coll. on the Slovak Television as amended and Act No. 255/1991 Coll. on the Slovak Radio as amended should be replaced with new regulations that must include the obligation of public media to offer programmes in regional or minority languages , to support and/or enable regular broadcasting of radio and television programmes in regional or minority languages and to support or ease the production and distribution of audiovisual pieces in regional or minority languages.

In order to improve the situation of the Roma in the field of culture it is necessary to adopt and financially cover concrete medium-term actions falling under the competence of the Ministry of Culture:

1. to draft a National Minority Act and National Minority Culture Financing Act in compliance with the obligations in the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages,
2. to lay down in a legislative way the access of the Roma minority to public information means in compliance with the obligations undertaken when signing the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages.
3. to support the Romany culture mainly through the Ministry of Culture by:

3.1 financially supporting the publishing of Roma periodicals and non-periodicals. It is necessary to grant a contribution for publishing at least one Romany periodical in the framework of the grant system,

3.2 creating a Roma national minority department at the National Educational Centre focusing on methodological assistance to national minority associations.

The following actions to be ensured outside the sector of the Ministry of Culture include:

1. creating Roma national minority departments at regional educational centres,
2. regular TV broadcasting of a Roma magazine from three regions on a weekly basis,
3. regular radio broadcasting of a Roma magazine from three regions on a weekly basis.

The 2003 priorities:

to financially support regular publishing of at least one Romany bi-weekly in the framework of the grant system.

G. Financial coverage for the 2003 priorities implementation

It is anticipated that the implementation of the proposed 2003 priorities of the government will be financially covered from the titles of the individual ministries in the state budget. The following Table presents a proposal for using funds from the Title of the General Treasury Administration - Cultural Needs of the Roma Community and the Reserve for Tackling the Problems of the Roma Community.

The structure of the Title of the General Treasury Administration - Social and Cultural Needs of the Roma Community and the Reserve for Tackling the Problems of the Roma Community for 2003

Programme	Amount
The Comprehensive Roma Settlement Development Programme	18 mill. SKK
Scholarship Fund	1 mill. SKK
Secondary School of Arts at Košice	2 mill. SKK
Supporting secondary schools	10 mill. SKK
Social Field Workers Programme	4 mill. SKK
Influencing public opinion	5 mill. SKK
Projects	10 mill. SKK
TOTAL	50 mill. SKK